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SOUTH AFRICA TIED TO ABORTIVE COUP

An Ex-Intelligence Agent, Held
in Seychelles, Is Reported
Implicating Superiors

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Special to The New York Times

JOHANNESBURG, April 21 — A former South African intelligence operative is reported to be disclosing to his captors in the Seychelles details of South African Government involvement in a bungled coup there in November.

Martin Dolinchek was captured on the island of Mahé shortly after a band of white mercenaries had escaped in a commandeered Air India plane. He quickly acknowledged being an agent of the National Intelligence Service of South Africa but maintained, at first, that his employers knew nothing about his involvement in the plot to overthrow the Government of President France Albert René.

Later, in testimony to a United Nations commission dispatched to investigate the attempted coup and in interrogation sessions with the Seychelles police, Mr. Dolinchek is reported to have said that high officers of the South African Defense Forces as well as the intelligence service were well informed of the plot. Now reports from Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles, say Mr. Dolinchek is planning to become a state witness and to "tell all" in the trial of six other accused conspirators who were captured in the aftermath of the botched coup.

Already he is said to have implicated the commanding officer of the South African forces in the disputed territory of South-West Africa, Maj. Gen. Charles Lloyd, saying he gave the general a full report on the plan to overthrow President René's Government. This was said to have been in 1980, when General Lloyd was stationed in the province of Natal on the Indian Ocean coast.

Meeting With Mercenary Leader

In an interview with The Witness, a newspaper in the Natal provincial capital of Pietermaritzburg, General Lloyd acknowledged last week that Mr. Dolinchek had approached him and tried to persuade him to meet with Col. Mike Hoare, the mercenary leader who is now standing trial in South Africa with 42 of his men on a hijacking charge. General Lloyd told the newspaper that the meeting never took place and denied that he had any prior knowledge of the attempted coup.

Mr. Dolinchek is reported, however, to be asserting that the South African Government decided in 1980 to provide logistic support to the plotters and that the Soviet- and Hungarian-made AK-47 assault rifles and Chinese hand grenades that they tried to smuggle into the Seychelles had all been made available by the armed forces here from stocks captured from guerrillas in South-West Africa.

The National Intelligence Service has not tried to deny that Mr. Dolinchek had been one of its agents, but it has maintained that his employment was terminated two months before the coup attempt. However, a pro-Government Afrikaans-language newspaper, Rapport, quoted his wife as saying he was driven to the airport when he left for the Seychelles by a colleague from the intelligence service.

The newspaper also declared that active planning for the Seychelles coup started the day after a dinner party that was held at a Durban hotel last September for officers of the National Intelligence Service. The dinner was said to have been attended by Neil Barnard, the head of the service.

High-Level Approval Reported

Rapport did not go so far as to say that Mr. Barnard knew of the plot and gave his approval, but that appeared to be the implication of its account. Other reports say that Mr. Dolinchek had high-level approval, presumably from the National Intelligence Service, to arrange a false passport for Colonel Hoare.

None of these accounts suggest that South Africa took direct responsibility for the planning or execution of the plot but rather that the authorities here were aware of its existence and ready to be helpful. The English-language Rand Daily Mail reported today from Victoria that the South African intelligence service sent two agents to the Seychelles in the guise of tourists two months ago in an effort to discover how much Mr. Dolinchek had been telling the authorities there. The newspaper quoted Mr. Dolinchek as later identifying one of the agents, Gerhardus Rothman, as the second-in-command in the agency.

A further indication of official South African wariness about disclosures and developments in the Seychelles was contained in a remarkably soft response made last week by Prime Minister P.W. Botha to an appeal from President René for clemency for three young members of the banned African National Congress who have been condemned to die for their part in an attack on a police station.

Mr. René did not mention the South Africans captured on the islands after the unsuccessful coup — all of whom now face treason charges and a possible death penalty — but it was immediately concluded that he was offering to exchange the lives of the mercenaries for those of the condemned insurgents here. Anticipating the Prime Minister's response, the Afrikaans press swiftly branded Mr. René's appeal as "cheap opportunism" and "blackmail."

But Mr. Botha, who ordinarily might have been expected to dismiss the appeal in equally truculent terms, sent back a diplomatically worded message assuring the President of the Seychelles that any decision on clemency would "take cognizance of all the relevant facts, including your own representations."

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